

Volunteers Needed for State Animal Response Team

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR NEW STATE ANIMAL RESPONSE TEAM

DOVER – The Delaware Animal Response (DAR) program is offering a unique opportunity for Delawareans to support state and county efforts to keep animals, small and large, safe and protected during emergencies and disasters. The program is recruiting community volunteers for the new Delaware State Animal Response Team (DE SART) and their specialized unit, the Delaware Veterinary Medical Reserve Corps (DE VMRC).

Managed by the Division of Public Health's Office of Animal Welfare (OAW), the program is looking for volunteers with various experiences and skills, including:

- Small or large animal care, handling, control, training, sheltering, or rescue experience
- First responders and others with experience in emergency preparedness and response
- Veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and veterinary assistants
- Persons interested in animal welfare and animal protection.

The deadline to sign up for the first round of recruitment is Monday, June 1, 2015. Training will be provided in a range of areas, including community outreach, animal emergency sheltering, and field response.

These programs were developed to protect the health, safety, and welfare of companion animals, and promote the human-animal bond in the state of Delaware. When the OAW assumed responsibility for animal response in 2014, Executive Director Hetti Brown enthusiastically welcomed the program and saw it as a logical fit. "The animal response program's primary mission is to ensure that pet owners are taken into

consideration in state preparedness efforts and that the needs of Delaware's animals are addressed during emergencies or disasters," Brown said.

As outlined in the Delaware Emergency Operations Plan (DEOP), the program is responsible for a range of animal emergency preparedness and response areas, including community education, animal emergency sheltering, animal evacuation and transportation, and animal search and rescue.

"Volunteers on the state's animal response team and veterinary medical reserve corps will provide the critical management and staffing support necessary to set up and run successful animal emergency shelters during times of extreme need, and will assist with community outreach and education events," said Program Coordinator Jane P. Walmsley. "As the program evolves, they will have the option to specialize in other areas of animal response and take on leadership roles based on their skills and interests."

The program was originally established to meet the requirements of the groundbreaking Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act passed by Congress in 2006. This federal legislation was a direct response to lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, when many would not leave home without their pets and many pets had to be left behind by those who did evacuate. It became clear that pets must be included in emergency planning for the safety and welfare of all. The PETS Act requires states to take into account the needs of household and service animals before, during, and after an emergency or disaster.

Those interested in becoming a SART or VMRC volunteer are also encouraged to sign up to attend an introductory training to be held in late spring of 2015, and the companion animal shelter training, which will be provided this summer.

For more information or to apply to become a volunteer, call

(302) 255-4628 or email p.jane.walmsley@delaware.gov.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, drink almost no sugary beverages.

###

Rita Landgraf, Secretary

Jill Fredel, Director of Communications

302-255-9047, Cell 302-357-7498

Email: jill.fredel@delaware.gov

[Delaware Health and Social Services](#) – [Division of Public Health](#)